

Re-homing Greer Twiss' Flight Trainer for Albatross sculpture on Victoria Wharf (Devonport)

Auckland Council is the guardian of public spaces on behalf of all Aucklanders. In this role, it recognises that public art uniquely contributes to community life and the vitality of Auckland as it does in every city around the world. It helps council to build the world's most liveable city; a creative city, loved by its people.

Public art is one way for artists' creativity and ideas to make a worthwhile contribution to develop Auckland's contemporary public realm. The council is committed to developing and maintaining the enduring legacy of the region's public art for all Aucklanders.

However, as the city changes and evolves, the need to relocate public sculptures may arise. Auckland Council has a long-term stewardship role and must weigh up responsibilities to a wide range of stakeholders including artists, donors or lenders, the community, business groups as well as the city's collective cultural heritage. We are therefore hoping that the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board supports our proposal to relocate *Flight Trainer for Albatross* by renowned sculptor, Greer Twiss, on Victoria Wharf.

The artwork

Flight Trainer for Albatross was created by Greer Twiss in 2004 and was gifted to the city by the Auckland City Sculpture Trust. The sculpture carries a message of global significance, informed by conservation issues, particularly the protection of our marine environment and birdlife. Every year, untold numbers of birds are killed or maimed through trawling and netting at sea. Many birds not killed outright sustain damage to their wings which cripples them or kills them indirectly by preventing them from searching for food.

The artwork depicts three large albatross supported in a stainless steel frame and another at ground level. Twiss is suggesting that humankind redress these wrongs and has designed a device to support injured birds. He has strapped three young birds on the framework, elevated and with wings extended, in an attempt to teach them how to fly again. The birds face out to sea where they belong. The sculpture's frame, or 'trainer', is a metaphor for the support needed by endangered sea birds like the albatross.

Throughout Twiss' lengthy and distinguished career and across the wide variety of work he has produced there has always been a sense of the sculptor's process and a manipulation of materials in his work. Although created in contemporary stainless steel, *Flight Trainer for Albatross* is no exception, revealing an underbelly which shows rough welds and scoring of the surface. In creating a surface such as this, the artist wants to expose the technique and remind us of the physicality of the process.

The artwork was located facing the harbour at the bottom of Albert and Quay Street until March 2014. It was removed and put into storage to enable wharf strengthening work and in anticipation of the Quay Street Redevelopment Plan.



Flight Trainer for Albatross full sculpture



Detail

The artist

Greer Twiss is one of New Zealand's most renowned and respected sculptors. For 60 years, he has been exploring the potential of three-dimensional form, using a variety of techniques to produce a wide range of works. Dr Robin Woodward writes, 'he addresses matter of perception presentation and the politics of display among themes that are domestic and global, formal and conceptual. Twiss' work tells a story of New Zealand sculpture over the last 55 years'.

Twiss has devoted his life to working and teaching sculpture in New Zealand. He has taught and mentored many of New Zealand's finest sculptors. He also had a long career teaching at the University of Auckland, where he was an Associate Professor at the Elam School of Fine Arts, becoming Head of Sculpture in 1974. He retired from the school in 1998. Greer has been recognised as an Icon by the Arts Foundation of New Zealand.

The proposed site

Victoria Wharf has been undergoing redevelopment works in order to enhance Devonport's seaside village identity with a new gateway and character filled urban spaces. A new boardwalk and café has been built, giving the wharf a new lease of life. The council believe that Twiss' sculpture will help the wharf become a destination, not only for commuters, but also for people who want to engage in the arts, eat, drink and socialise. Twiss Greer himself also has a connection with Devonport, having lived in Auckland all his life he regularly visits the area with his children and grand-children. He is also a keen supporter of Depot Artspace.

We are proposing that the sculpture is re-sited on the second corner of Victoria Wharf, an ideal location, with the backdrop of the sea enabling the story of the Albatross to be told in a fitting setting. The Arts and Culture Unit investigated various sites along the wharf with

Community Facilities/Parks, and it was decided that the second corner is an uncluttered space, with enough room for access vehicles and people to manoeuvre around the sculpture. This location would also mean that the sculpture did not interfere with people undertaking recreational activities on the wharf.

The height of the work and the configuration of the birds will be significantly redesigned in consultation with the artist to suit the new location. This will include designing a less dominant supporting frame that works with the existing style of the wharf. The arts team are currently working with the artists and a CAD designer to produce some digital mock ups of what the artwork could look like on the wharf. We will share these with the Local Board as soon as they have been finalised.

