

DESIGN OF A CITIES URBAN FABRIC:

ZEALANDIA

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Zealandia - city of Aotearoa, NZ - The Land of the Long White Cloud.

The design ethos was to create an easily navigated city, a city that allowed for free movement, with simple but well defined pathways, stops and vistas. It is a city that has been designed to be a walkable city. A city that each day of the week a person can go for a lunchtime walk and each time take a differing route. Each space, or outdoor room inter-connects, yet through theming of materiality (tactility) or formality / informality of space is unique and individual.

Zealandia is the amalgam of two primary cultures; that of the European and Maori with the influence and presence of Polynesia. Each has served to give a visual presence. The European has given the creation of the city, with scale and style continuing the lineages of each 'import' of idea and style. The original inhabitants, the Maori – or Tangata to Whenua are a vital cultural interlink between the land and human.

The lakes edge, once densely populated by flax and water reeds has long been stripped bare. The modern city demanded lake access, so with the absence of water plants a new species was planted, this was the Norfolk Pine. Its location gave an easy reading of the shoreline, with the pines marching along the shoreline. With the Museums presence a resurgence of plant species and location has ensued. To give access to the water's edge a pathway able to handle pedestrians, cyclists and joggers has now become an important strip of land, the interface between land and water.

Clumps of flax have been re-planted, amongst built in seating with corten steel paneled 'flax' that from a distance show and mark the position of the extent of the flax prior to European occupation.

Another important use and now landmark was an old portage point where ancient Maori would carry their Waka, or War canoe across land to the sea beyond. This point marks the narrowest point of isthmus. Again the Museums presence has helped facilitate the re-marking of this pathway. From the water a bold vertical marked – termed Maui's Hook¹ from this point a graveled surface leads across the land, stepping up and down (a reading of the journey) and finally into water again (the sea beyond). Here again flax and water reeds are planted within rows of waterways which symbolize the ancient sand dunes of the seas foreshore.

The Maori presence is again emphasized within a smaller garden contained between the Museums Halls and Restaurant (looking out to the lake-front) this is the Pataka garden. A Pataka was a Maori storehouse, a house lifted from the land with a single or multiple poles to

¹ Maui was the ancient Maori warrior that caught a great fish, which when landed became Aotearoa, or New Zealand.

stop the eating of the food by rodents. Here three Pataka types have been placed within a densely planted (fern, tree fern and flax) area, that gives an immediacy of been transported from the formal frontage of the Museum into a patch of NZ bush.

To the other-side of the portage lies the Healing Garden, or Family Garden. This space has been treated to create an open area, emphasized by palm trees which stretch the vertical plane upwards to give a sense of a big contained volume. On one side is the Museum, with an interface of a reflecting, play pond that meanders along, breaking the harshness of the external façade and translating it as softened to the play area for young and old. Bounding this to the otherside are concrete platers with native tussocks (tall grasses) with strip timber bench seating for multiple points of repose. Built in brightly coloured childrens play objects and water spouts enliven the area, with the tactility of the crunch of gravel under-foot, and the rustle of leaves from the trees and palms to the soft rustle of the tussocks.

Again back to the Lakes-edge, from where, starting as a part wharf the Promenade begins. Here is placed the ferry Terminal, where Europeans and Maori alike would use as a water taxi and supply point. The Promenade is a widely treated pedestrianized road that travels from the waters body into the heart of the city. Along its spine bristle cabbage trees, hardy and elegant. Along this journey to the left is the sunken Amphitheatre and Sports ground. This is a creation of a space within a larger space, bordered by basalt walling and trees above with gently terraced grass to one end and formal granite steps to the other. The Promenade continues passing another strip of planting to the right. Here trees and paving create a canopy of shade where seating is intermingled and the vista of the lakes-edge to be enjoyed.

The promenade continues into Market square, here also known as Sculpture Square. The entire perimeter is activated, Cafes, shops and the entrance to the Museum. To the centre is placed a strip of land, profiled to give a reading of the old landscape. Within this has been planted some of the largest trees of the NZ forest, the White Kauri, or king of the forest. These give a living breathing heart to the urban square and city.

From here leads connection to the Tram Square. A simple space, treated to give a flexibility of space and therefore use. The idea of the Tram, or mechanized transport using rails has been re-designed to give lineal strands of rail, with planting between, holding both static and moveable planters. These moveable planters allow for re-configuration of the space according to use.

The city is now set. A grouping of external rooms, designed for everyday use. Not empty spaces without use, but spaces that are occupiable by various people, groups and by use. This is a living breathing city – the City of Zealandia.