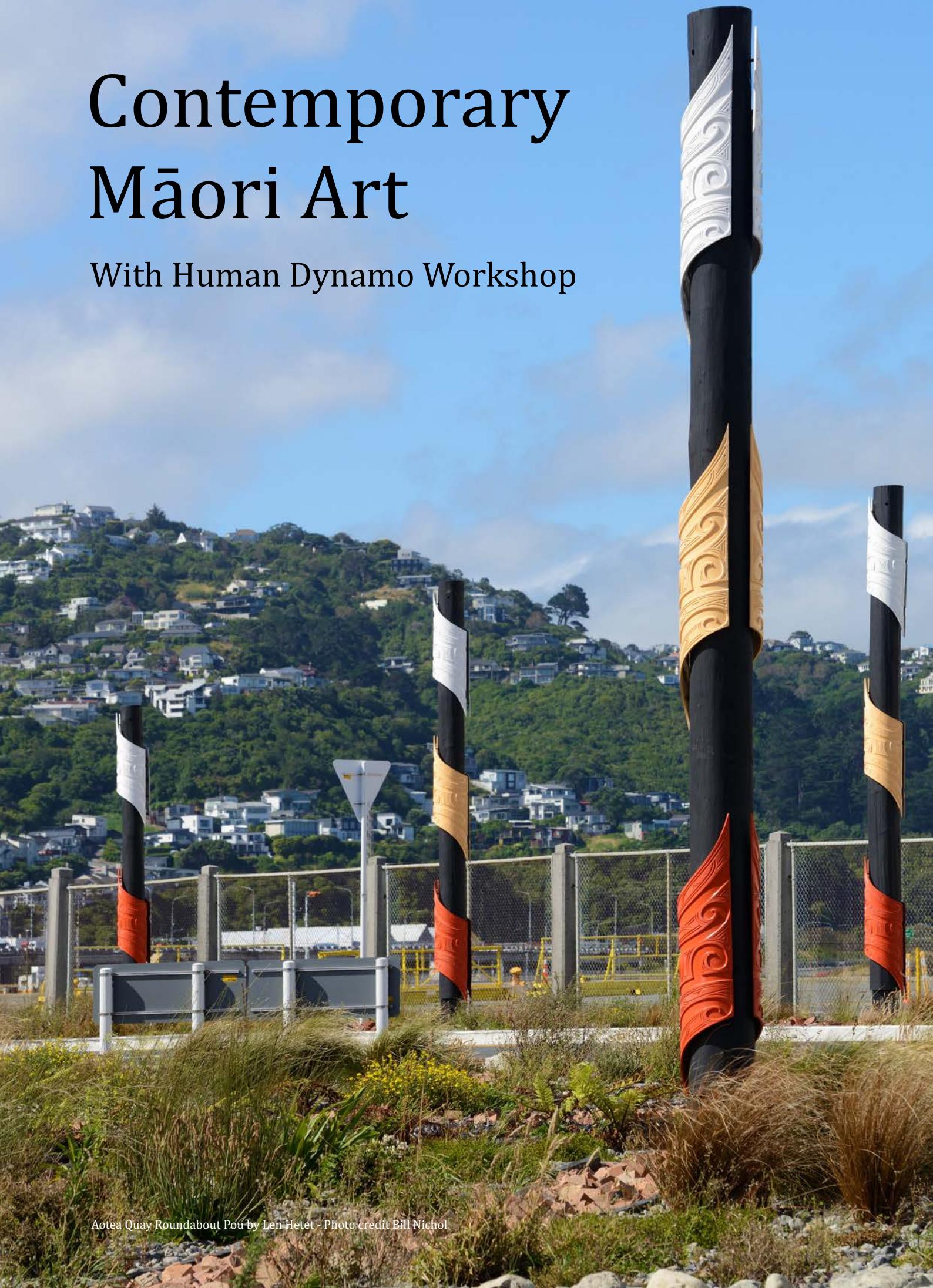
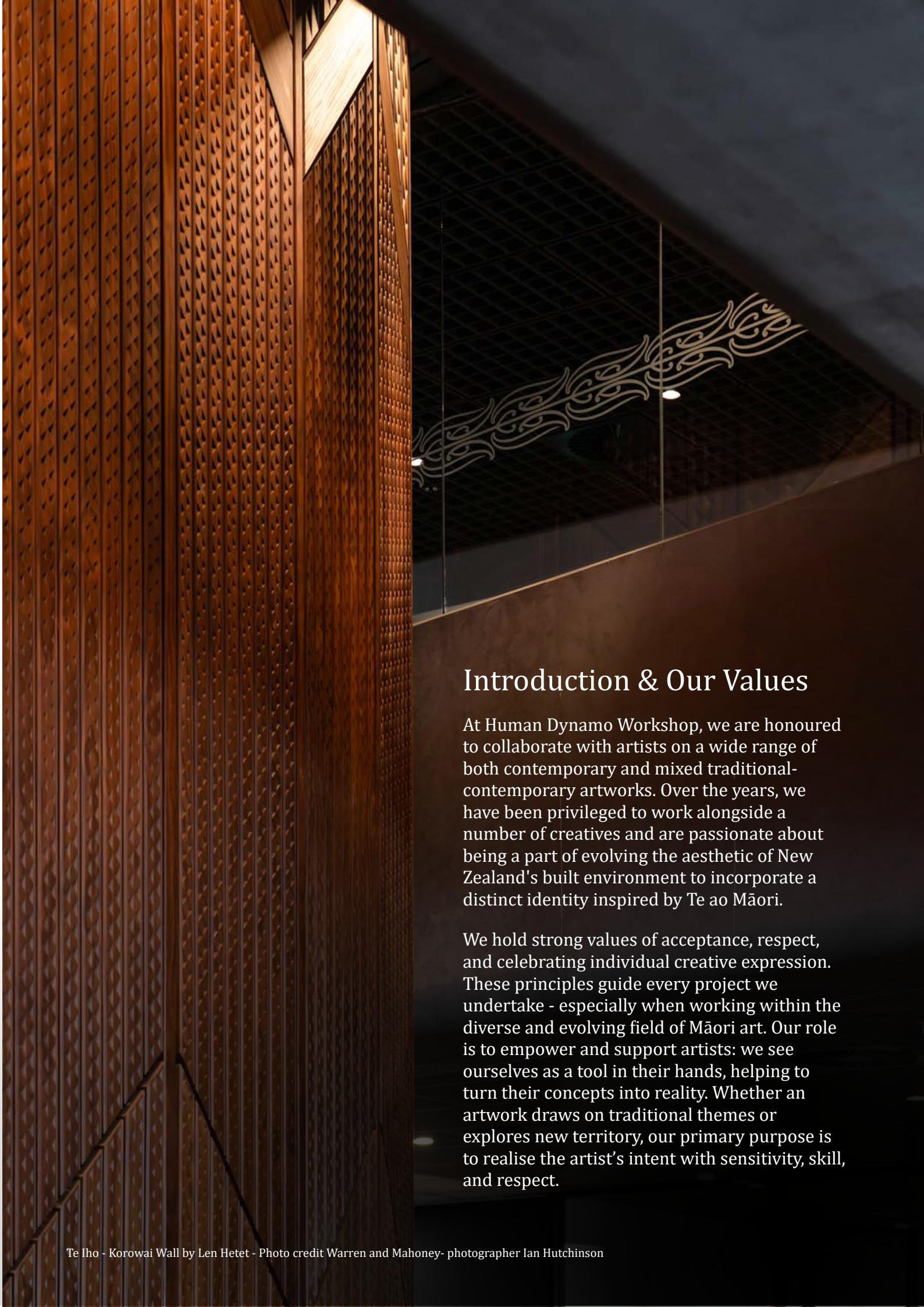


Contemporary Māori Art

With Human Dynamo Workshop



Aotea Quay Roundabout Pou by Len Hetet - Photo credit Bill Nichol



Introduction & Our Values

At Human Dynamo Workshop, we are honoured to collaborate with artists on a wide range of both contemporary and mixed traditional-contemporary artworks. Over the years, we have been privileged to work alongside a number of creatives and are passionate about being a part of evolving the aesthetic of New Zealand's built environment to incorporate a distinct identity inspired by Te ao Māori.

We hold strong values of acceptance, respect, and celebrating individual creative expression. These principles guide every project we undertake - especially when working within the diverse and evolving field of Māori art. Our role is to empower and support artists: we see ourselves as a tool in their hands, helping to turn their concepts into reality. Whether an artwork draws on traditional themes or explores new territory, our primary purpose is to realise the artist's intent with sensitivity, skill, and respect.

Why Work with Us on Contemporary Māori Art Projects?

Creating contemporary Māori art typically involves several interested parties:

- ◎ The client or commissioner, who typically provides the funding and the opportunity
- ◎ The main contractor, responsible for building the space where the artwork will live
- ◎ The architect, whose vision shapes the overall context for the work
- ◎ Mana whenua, whose stories and matauranga feed into the artist's vision
- ◎ And, at the centre, the artist themselves.

Our unique role is to bring together all these voices and help weave their interests and requirements into a unified, successful result. We act as advocates for the artist's vision - helping ensure that the creative intent isn't lost amid the inevitable pressures of timeframes, budgets, and competing priorities.

By getting involved early, we can help balance and integrate all these needs:

- ◎ Preserving the artist's intent: We work closely with the artist to understand what's intrinsic to the work and to protect those essential elements throughout the process.
- ◎ Practical problem-solving: We advise on materiality, fabrication options, and technical solutions that respect the art while meeting practical constraints.
- ◎ Facilitating smooth delivery: We coordinate closely with contractors and architects to ensure the project stays on schedule, within budget, and integrates seamlessly.

Ultimately, this collaborative approach results in artworks that are not only culturally meaningful but also beautifully realised and practically delivered.



How to Start a Project with Us

There's no single "ideal" way to begin a project with Human Dynamo Workshop - we're comfortable working with clients and artists at every stage of the creative journey. Whether you have a fully-formed concept or just a spark of an idea, we will help bring the vision to life.

From Idea to Realisation: Our Flexible Process

1) Starting with an Idea

Many projects start with little more than a sketch. We welcome artists and clients at this earliest stage, working together to explore fabrication methods, materiality, and how your vision might take shape in the real world.

2) Conceptual Design

Once a proposed direction is agreed on, we develop a conceptual design. This might be a digital visualisation, a physical sample, or both - providing everyone with a tangible sense of what the finished artwork could become. The work is fully costed at this stage and we then work to a fixed price.

3) Detailed Design

When there's excitement and agreement to move forward, we dive into detailed design. Here, we refine the form and prepare it for manufacturing. This phase can include plan drawings for architects and contractors, technical details, and a clear project plan outlining timing and logistics such as speciality services and permits required.

4) Fabrication and Installation

Once the details are set, we manage the full fabrication process - from sourcing materials to building, finishing, and (ideally) installing the completed artwork. We prefer to handle installation ourselves, ensuring the work is cared for right up to completion.

5) Ongoing Care

Our relationship doesn't end at installation. We are available to help maintain and care for taonga artworks in the future, making sure they remain as striking as the day they were unveiled.



Te Iho - Korowai Wall by Len Hetet - Photo credit Warren and Mahoney and the photographer Ian Hutchinson

Cultural Consultation & Protocols

We understand that our role in creating contemporary Māori art is one of support and facilitation, not authorship. We see ourselves as a tool in the artist's hands - helping bring their vision to life, rather than imposing our own.

◎ The Artist Leads the Process:

We are guided first and foremost by the artist. In all cultural matters, from the use of Māori motifs and language to the telling of stories, the artist's wishes and tikanga shape our approach. We strive to ensure that artists feel comfortable and respected in our workspace, and that their protocols and requirements are fully observed.

◎ Respecting Tikanga and Cultural Integrity:

Whenever an artwork incorporates elements of Māori tradition - such as specific motifs, language, or narratives - we rely on the artist's direction to ensure authenticity and respect. If the artist requires input from iwi, hapū, or other cultural advisors, we facilitate and support this process, recognising that meaningful consultation is vital for projects with deep cultural significance.

◎ Creating a Welcoming, Collaborative Environment:

Throughout the project, we welcome artists into our workspace and encourage collaboration at every stage. Our goal is always to help them tell their story, using our skills and resources to realise their creative vision as faithfully and respectfully as possible.





Parliament Pou - whakairo by Sam Hauwaho, wrap by Len Hetet - Photo credit Bill Nichol

Why Choose Human Dynamo Workshop?

There are several reasons why Human Dynamo Workshop is especially well-suited to support contemporary Māori art projects:

◎ Decades of Diverse Creative Experience:

With nearly 30 years of experience fabricating one-off creative projects, our team has worked across an exceptionally wide range of mediums - ceramics, steel, timber, fiberglass, carbon fiber, plastics, and more. This depth and breadth of material expertise allow us to approach each project with genuine flexibility, wielding materiality as a core element of artistic expression.

◎ A Spirit of Possibility:

Our values set us apart. We pride ourselves on never saying no - always looking for ways to make even the most ambitious ideas possible. We approach each project with an open mind and a can-do attitude, working alongside artists to find creative solutions rather than roadblocks.

◎ Championing Creative Collaboration:

Artists are often the ones who push boundaries and redefine what's possible. We believe in standing by artists and advocating for their vision, providing the technical skill and experience to bring ideas to life, no matter how bold or unconventional.



He Auripo by Len Hetet - Photo credit Bill Nichol





Ngati Whatua Orakei - Te Wharekura by Graham Tipene - Photo
credit Gibson Group

Case Study: Ngāti Tūwharetoa Atrium Wall Artwork, Taupō

In 2024, Human Dynamo Workshop was honoured to be engaged by Ngāti Tūwharetoa to create a significant artwork for the atrium wall of their new multi-story building in Taupō. This was an ambitious project, with the wall stretching 38 meters wide and 15 meters high - covering 500 square meters and visible from every level of the building.

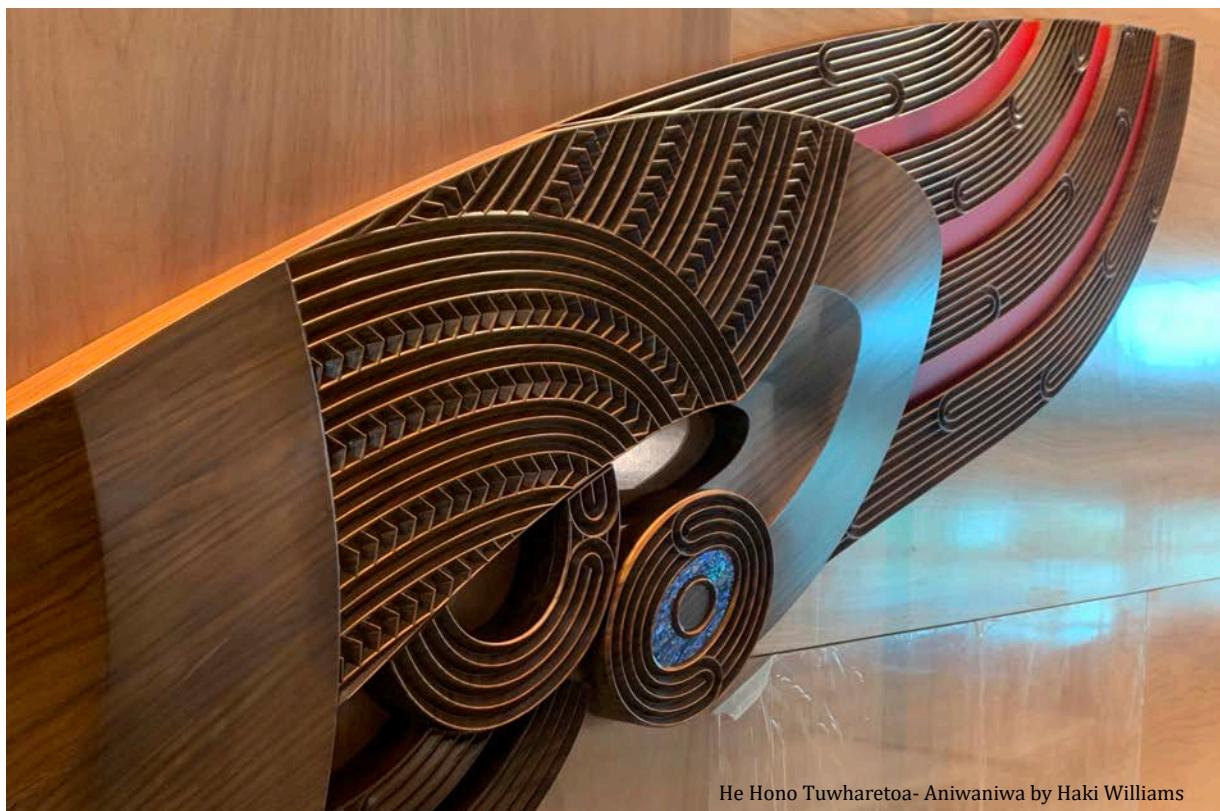
Bringing Multiple Visions Together

The iwi's vision was for the wall to tell their story through carved Māori designs and artworks, developed by a panel of four artists. We quickly saw the importance of unifying these distinct artistic voices into a single, coherent composition that would do justice to the iwi's narrative and aspirations.

To support this, we recommended involving Len Hetet, a Wellington-based artist and member of Ngāti Tūwharetoa with whom we have worked extensively. Len collaborated with each artist - individually and as a group - digitising their pencil sketches, extracting key elements, and shaping an overall composition for the wall.

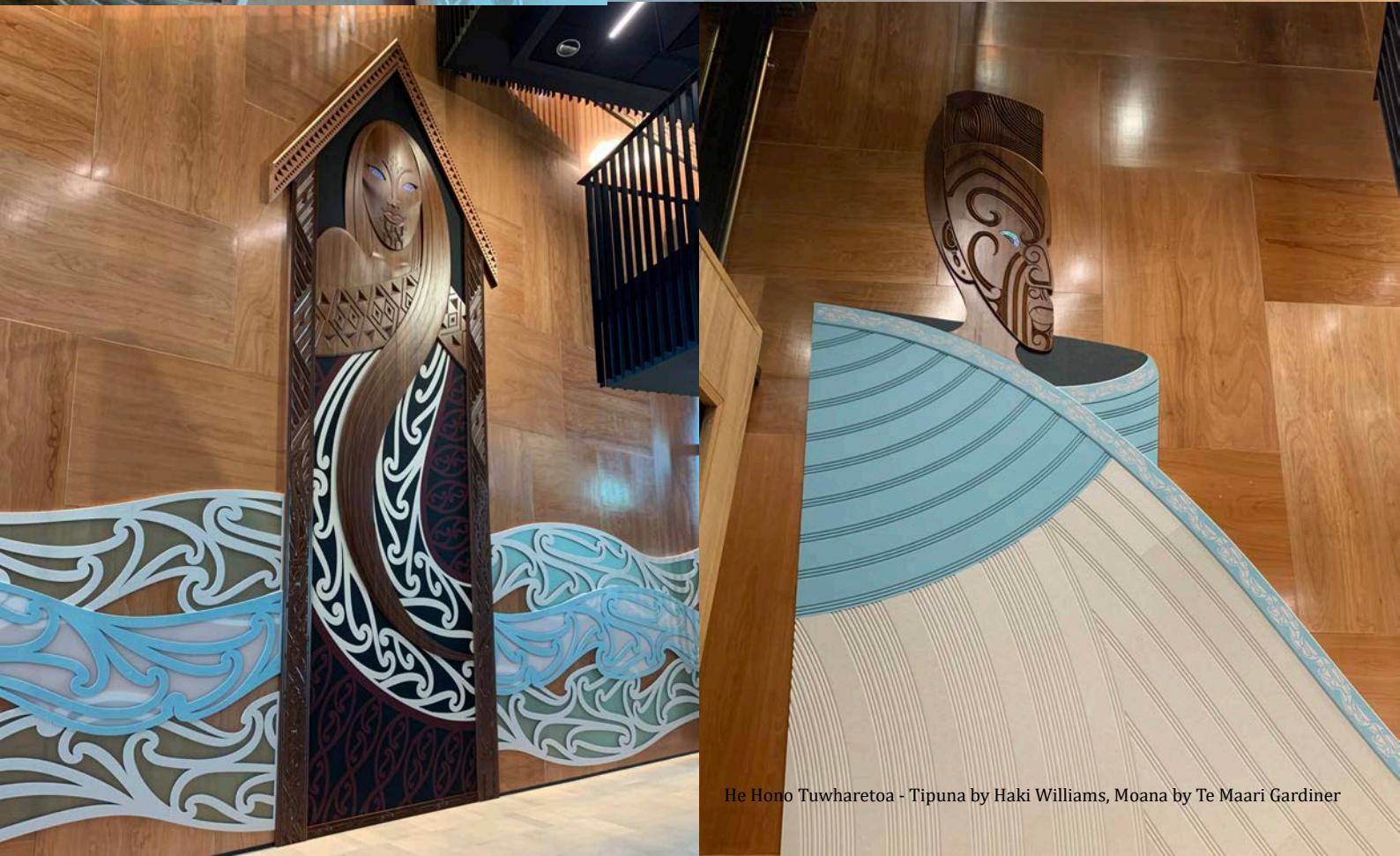
A Collaborative and Consultative Process Throughout the project, all artists remained engaged and consulted. We regularly shared digital renders and samples, sought feedback, and priced components transparently with the client. Working closely with the main contractor, Watts & Hughes, we ensured the fabrication and installation would align with the wider building schedule and requirements.

Innovation and Materiality Much of the artwork was CNC-carved from thermally modified timber, finished with paint for durability and effect. We also integrated contemporary materials, including acrylic, aluminium and Autex sound-insulating panels.





He Hono Tuwharetoa - Waka by Haki Williams, Moana by Te Maari Gardiner



He Hono Tuwharetoa - Tipuna by Haki Williams, Moana by Te Maari Gardiner

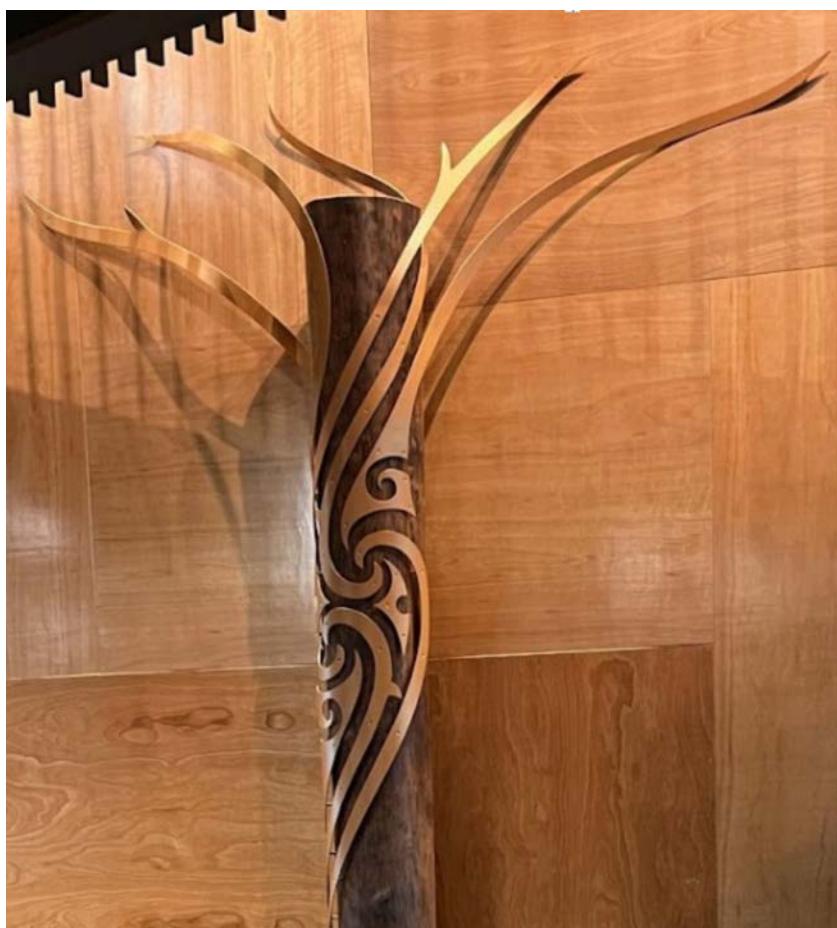
Key Features of the Artwork:

- ◎ A maramataka (lunar calendar) tracing the moon's phases
- ◎ A near full-scale waka (canoe), 16 meters long, with intricately carved taurapa (stern) and tauihu (prow)
- ◎ A bold anewanewa (rainbow)
- ◎ On the ground floor large-scale representations of the iwi's tipuna (ancestors), including Ngātoroirangi, Tia and representations of local maunga (mountains) and rivers
- ◎ A 7.5-metre pou, representing an upturned tree from local tradition

The design, guided by Len Hetet's vision, draws the viewer's eye from the ground floor upwards - creating a sense of awe and inviting viewers to follow the iwi's story as it ascends the wall.

Challenges and Successes

A key challenge was the project's tight timeframe: the iwi had tried other approaches but turned to us late in the process, needing the work completed in time for the building's opening. Through careful planning, transparent communication, and a committed team effort, we delivered the artworks on time and within budget.



A Moment of Meaning

Witnessing the completed artworks unveiled to Ngāti Tūwharetoa was a moving experience for our entire team. Seeing the iwi's tipuna represented at such a significant scale - and the genuine appreciation from the iwi - underscored the cultural importance of the project and our role in helping bring these stories to life.



Human Dynamo Workshop

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