

EMBARGOED: 22 November 2020

STAGE ONE of Visitor Transformation revealed

Since 2014, Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum has been working on a series of visitor transformation projects to ensure the Museum is a place fit for an evolving city and its people. The end of the six-year journey is in sight, and by its conclusion in 2021, 35% of the museum floor will have been transformed.

On Thursday 3 December, after being closed for approximately 18 months, Auckland Museum will reopen its South Atrium entrance to reveal the most significant changes to the Museum in more than a decade. It reopens with new spaces, experiences, artworks, food and retail offers, in addition to international special exhibition [Brickman Awesome: Epic LEGO® Creations](#).

“The experience is truly transformative for our visitor” says Dr David Gaimster, Chief Executive of Auckland War Memorial Museum. “The development is the result of years of careful planning to respond to a growing Auckland and the needs of our visitors. The reality was that at peak periods, the Museum was operating at capacity and struggling to accommodate our growing visitor numbers.”

“For the first time, Auckland Museum has two compelling and distinctive entry experiences, one acknowledging our rich history and global heritage, and the other celebrating our place in the culture and cultures of 21st century Auckland and Aotearoa,” explains Dr Gaimster.

“What felt very much like the back door of a public building now provides a visually stunning museum arrival, entry and orientation experience with world-class hospitality and retail,” says Gaimster. “The South Atrium has been given greater cultural dignity transforming it into a generous, warm and multicultural arrival precinct where all visitors are welcomed with manaakitanga.”

The refreshed Te Ao Mārama (South Atrium) will embody one of the Museum’s guiding principles: manaakitanga. As a space of arrival and cultural welcome, it provides a unique and explicit Mana Whenua welcome, emphasising the Museum’s connection to the cultural landscape of Pukekawa while acknowledging the dynamic ancestral and contemporary connections of Tāmaki Makaurau to the wider Moana Pacific.

Auckland Museum has worked with iwi and pacific communities in Auckland to create the new South Atrium as a space for pōwhiri, whakatau and other cultural celebrations, events and research. It will be a place for all visitors to exchange experiences, share knowledge and information.

“Kaitiakitanga for manuhiri, taonga and respect for the building’s history were front of mind when developing the new museum environment” says Dr Gaimster. “The new design transforms Te Ao Mārama, lifting the mana of these spaces.”

“The full reveal of the Tanoa bowl architecture and the new mana whenua and Pasifika artworks and audio-visual experiences have converted the space into a rich architectural and cultural gallery in its own right,” says Dr Gaimster.

The transformation continues the architectural vision which began 20 years ago to improve the visitor experience.

“The original 2006 vision for the Museum’s South Atrium by Noel Lane and colleagues’ has now been realised,” says Dr Gaimster. “The structure and meaning of Tanoa was entirely concealed behind later operational interventions. Now it is revealed in all its glory for visitors to share.”

“The design is deeply respectful of the building’s heritage, while integrating multicultural concepts that reinforces the Museum’s relevance to its many diverse audiences, cementing its position as a cultural leader and major tourist attraction” say Jasmx Architects.

The ‘Tanoa’ / Pasifika bowl, installed in 2006, represents the gathering of people together. The Tanoa is now fully realised as a circular bowl suspended over the new bicultural welcome space. The radial geometry places the visitor in the centre of the Museum, enabling them to orientate and connect outwards to Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa New Zealand, and the South Pacific beyond.

The Tanoa, and the mauri stone buried beneath the Atrium, is activated with a light and sound artwork referencing navigational narratives that acknowledges Mana Whenua presence and role as guardians of the land, building, taonga and people with the Museum.

Under the Tanoa is a looping animated audio-visual experience that shares the arrival of the three Mana Whenua iwi that make up the Museum’s Taumata-ā-Iwi. This experience contains the stories of Ngāti Whātua Orākei, Ngāti Paoa and Waikato Tanui, told by iwi, complete with rich soundscapes, waiata and animated visuals.

Three artworks were commissioned for the reopening, to enhance the multicultural manaakitanga of the space. On the ‘legs’ of the Tanoa are twin artworks, *Manulua*, by Tongan artist Sopolemalama Filipe Tohi. These sculptures are based on an ancient practice lalava (lashing) used across the Pacific in traditional Island buildings, tools and vaka (canoe) as the means of binding together, symbolising the unity of all things past, present and future.

In the entrance to Te Ao Mārama, artist Graham Tipene has created a pōwhiri threshold and gateway. *Te Tatau Kaitiaki* (The Guardians Gateway) has been inserted into two doors attached to the pillars that the visitor moves through as they enter and exit the space. The piece has a ceremonial role to play as part of the overarching tikanga of the space, and depicts two female figures, embodying the traditional voice of karanga or welcome.

The wāhi whakanoa by artist Chris Bailey will enable tikanga practice of whakanoa to be carried out, a vital and important element for the Museum. Sculpted from stone the wāhi whakanoa is a place where people are able to make themselves noa (common) after potentially coming into contact with taonga that are tapu. The two wāhi whakanoa, Hine Pu Te Hue and Rongo-mā-tāne, are placed one on each side so visitors can access them with ease on their exit from the South Atrium.

The redevelopment does not stop there. Visitors can also expect a new Museum Store, a museum bistro and café Tuitui, a Kai Room for guests who choose to self-cater on their visit, and increased amenities such as toilets, change facilities and lockers. A [Museum Membership](#)

programme has been launched for those visitors who seek a deeper relationship with their Museum. The Special Exhibition suite, which opened in 2019 is now capable of hosting international exhibitions. *Brickman Awesome: Epic LEGO® Creations*, will open to the public on Thursday 3 December 2020. Exclusive to Auckland Museum it will continue through the summer holidays until Sunday 28 February 2021.

“We are confident that the transformation will both surprise and delight Aucklanders and visitors to the city,” Dr Gaimster concludes. “It offers new opportunities for audience engagement, activation, and performance and will be a destination in its own right within Auckland’s much-loved iconic building.”

For more stories about Auckland Museum’s Transformation, visit:

<https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/your-museum/auckland-museum-transformed>

(ends)

For all media enquiries, interviews and images contact
Bex Martelletti, Publicist
Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum
bmartelletti@aucklandmuseum.com | +64 21 955 362

Follow us and tag us:

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Twitter](#)

Sign up to our [What’s On email](#)

ABOUT AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Auckland War Memorial Museum is one of New Zealand’s first museums and is free for Aucklanders. The Museum tells the story of New Zealand, its place in the Pacific and its people. The Museum is a war memorial for the province of Auckland and holds one of New Zealand’s top three heritage libraries.

It has pre-eminent Māori and Pacific collections, significant natural history resources and major social and military history collections, as well as decorative arts and pictorial collections.

Further notes on the building’s architectural heritage:

The Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira is one of New Zealand’s most architecturally significant buildings.

In 1929, a powerful neo-classical building established Auckland War Memorial Museum on Pukekawa in Auckland Domain. The Auckland architects Grierson, Aimer and Draffin won the competition. All were World War One veterans. The axial geometry defines the proportions and volumes of the museum building. The significant Grand Foyer expresses the generosity of these with its symmetrical stairs rising to the World War One Memorial Hall. The hall is lit from above by an intricate stained-glass roof and holds the names of New Zealand’s WWI fallen soldiers. On the ground floor the pre-eminent gallery of the Māori Court spans the building. At its centre Hotunui, the wharenui gifted to Hauraki iwi by Ngati Awa faces north to the ceremonial spaces of the Grand Foyer, and the Cenotaph beyond. Māori motifs were drawn upon to inform the decorative elements of the building. To the east and the west, symmetrical heritage galleries are arranged opening from the Grand Foyer and the Māori Court. Beyond these were the back of house gallery spaces. The Phase One works have innovatively opened these spaces to the public, responding to the neo-classical proportions, with new direct connections to the South Atrium, and galleries that increase the depth and choice of a visitor’s experience.

In the 1960’s M.K and R.F Draffin, one of the original architect’s and his son, designed the southern 7extension to the museum which included a World War II Memorial Hall. This work continued with the neo-classical proportions which then resolved into the radial geometry of the South Court and Crescent to complete the building. These works completed the three levels of galleries with new galleries added to the Ground, Level 1 and 2.

In 2006 architects Peddle Thorp in association with Noel Lane Architects and Salmond Reed, internalised the South Court with the insertion of the “Tanoa”, a Pasifika bowl representing the gathering of people together, and roofed the volume with a copper and

glazed dome enclosing this space into the new four-storey South Atrium. The Special Exhibition Hall was located under the Tanoa, with an auditorium, classrooms contained in the Tanoa, and a significant events space at Level 3 with views across Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. The new Phase One works have enabled the vision of the Tanoa to be completed, with the relocation of the Special Exhibition Hall, thus freeing the Tanoa as a public space that welcomes visitors to the museum.

