



Symbolism is an architectural winner

Great design meets cultural needs of marae wharemate

One of the most coveted architectural award titles in New Zealand — the 2016 Supreme ADNZ Resene Architectural Design Award — has gone to a local wharemate at Tanatana Marae of Waimana designed by Aladina Harunani of Rotorua's apa architects and project managers.

The prestigious awards received more than 149 entries and were judged by leaders in the design and architecture community. The awards were announced in Auckland last night.

Tanatana marae is home to Ngati Rere, a hapu of Ngai Tuhoe.

Located at a riverside settlement in the heart of Tuhoe country, it is one of 12 marae along a 20km stretch of road known as the doorway from the North into Te Uruwera ranges.

Tuhoe tradition is unique in that the deceased are not mourned in the wharenuī meeting house, instead in a wharemate.

Mr Harunani was commissioned to design a wharemate for whanau to mourn over a three to four day period. The contemporary design would sit alongside a traditional wharenuī.

Marae committee representative Mar-

tin Rakuraku said the temporary shelters used in the past were no longer suitable and a permanent building was required.

"Traditionally the oratory takes place outside, whether it's rain, hail or sunshine. But we do occasionally get bad weather here and it's important for people to be warm and comfortable," Mr Rakuraku said.

"We decided we wanted this new

building to house the mourning family and to be a symbol of the future."

ADNZ judge and chief architect at the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Dr Duncan Joiner, said the symbolism within the building's basic structure was particularly meaningful.

"You can see the big shallow arches which end like fingers stretching out and grasping the land, as well as the pou reaching up to the sky. It's simple but enables quite complex emotions to take place. Both practically and metaphoric-

ally the design is now an integral part of the marae process. It's not something that's hidden away — it's there, and the idea is boldly but very sensitively presented," Dr Joiner said.

Mr Rakuraku said the new wharemate was an awesome blend of old and new . . . "almost spaceship like and attracts visitors from all over".

"As well as offering his architectural expertise, Aladina's background is similar to ours in terms of culture, which he also brought to the project. Now we are

much better positioned to carry out our tikanga [spiritual practice] and we've got an incredible building as well," said Mr Rakuraku.

The wharemate design is pragmatic, accessible to elderly kaumatua and people with disabilities. There is mattress storage for sleeping arrangements and a physical connection with the wharenuī. The interior comprises two main spaces — a front room where the body is placed and a sleeping space behind, where family members stay overnight. As well

as providing openness and closure between the two spaces, the central patterned tukutuku panel slides vertically to reveal an LCD screen, enhancing traditional protocols with modern technology for multi-media retelling of the deceased's life story.

ADNZ chief executive Astrid Andersen said designing for very specific and complex cultural requirements demanded a considerable amount of skill and sensitivity from a designer.

"It is inspiring to see a striking contemporary design, which is beautiful in its simplicity, fulfil the requirements of a complex brief. The design is a celebration of life, death, traditional life and a nod to the future. Congratulations to Aladina Harunani, what an accolade — to



win a supreme award in his first year of ADN(Z) membership,” said Ms Andersen.



DESIGNER: Aladina Harunani. **PHOTO/FILE**



AWARD WINNING: The wharemate at Tanatana Marae.

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